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ABSTRACT

This longitudinal study examined the associations between awareness of liking by peers and sociometric status to children's sociometric decisions and dyadic friendship choices. Subjects, 155 children in grades 1, 2 and 3, completed traditional sociometric nominations and sociometric ratings, and were asked to evaluate the nominations and ratings they believed they had received. Three years later, when the children were in grades 4, 5, and 6, they again completed sociometric tests. Awareness of liking at grades 1-3 was positively related to peer assessed social competence in grades 1-3 and grades 4-6. In addition, among sociometrically rejected children, those whose social status changed at grades 4-6 had higher awareness of liking scores in grades 1-3 than those rejected children who remained rejected. (JPB)

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A Longitudinal Study of Awareness of Peer Liking on Children's Peer Relationships

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Abstract

The associations of awareness of liking by peers and sociometric status to children's sociometric decisions and dyadic friendship choices were examined longitudinally. Children in Grades 1, 2, and 3 completed traditional sociometric nominations and sociometric ratings, and were asked to evaluate the nominations and ratings they believed they had received. Three years later (Grades 4, 5, and 6) the children completed sociometric nominations, sociometric ratings, and friendship nominations.

Awareness of liking at Grades 1 - 3 was positively related to peer assessed social competence in Grades 1 -3 and in Grades 4 - 6. In addition, among sociometrically Rejected children, those who changed social status at Grades 4 - 6 had higher awareness of liking scores in Grades 1 - 3 than those Rejected children who remained Rejected.

Purpose

The present research was a longitudinal examination of children's awareness of specific liking by peers and social competence. Some related cross-sectional research documents that accuracy of awareness of liking by peers may be associated with children responding in socially appropriate ways which may help to maintain other children's positive or negative perceptions of them, and may affect children's opportunities to make friends (Curtis and Miller, 1986). MacDonald and Cohen (1995) reported that popular status children were the most aware of which specific peers liked them and rejected status children were the least accurate in awareness of liking.

The present research was a longitudinal follow-up to MacDonald and Cohen (1995), and offered two important extensions over the previous work. First, we assessed the predictive utility of awareness of liking for the same children as they moved from early to late elementary school grades. Second, in addition to the sociometric assessments used in the earlier work, we included a friendship measure to determine the association of awareness of specific peer liking to special, dyadic peer relationships.

Methods

- ◆ Subjects: 80 males, 75 females

- ◆ Materials

Sociometric Nominations. At both assessments, sociometric nominations were collected. Children were given class rosters and were instructed to “circle the names of the three peers they liked the best.”

Expected Liking Nominations. To evaluate awareness of peer liking, at the first testing (Time 1: Grades 1 - 3), children were instructed to “circle the names of the children you think picked you.”

Sociometric Ratings. At both assessments, sociometric ratings were collected along a 6-point scale, ranging from “like very little” to “like very much.” The children were given a drawing of six water glasses, with varying levels of liquid, to illustrate the rating scale. Each child rated each classmate on the roster.

Methods (continued)

Friendship Nominations. In grades 4 - 6, children were instructed to circle the names of all of their friends. They were allowed an unlimited number of choices.

◆ Summary of Data Collection

	Grades	
	1 - 3	4 - 6
Sociometric Nominations	[Black Box]	[Black Box]
Sociometric Ratings		[Black Box]
Expected Nominations		[White Box]
Friendship Nominations	[White Box]	[Black Box]

Measures

(1) Awareness of Liking Scores

Using a Signal Detection Analysis, actual sociometric nominations received and sociometric nominations children believed they would receive were used to calculate d prime scores. The higher the score the greater the awareness, controlling for response bias and number of nominations.

(2) Social Preference Scores

Standardized Liking minus
Standardized Disliking

(3) Sociometric Ratings

(4) Mutual Friendships

Reciprocal (mutual)
nominations

Results: Correlations between '89 scores

	1	2
1. Awareness		
2. Social Preference	.25 **	
3. Sociometric Ratings	.18 *	.80**

*p < .05

**p < .01

Results: Correlations between '92 scores

	1	2
1. Friendships		
2. Social Preference	.48 **	
3. Sociometric Ratings	.42* *	.71**

*p < .05

**p < .01

Results (continued)

Additional analyses on popular and rejected children:

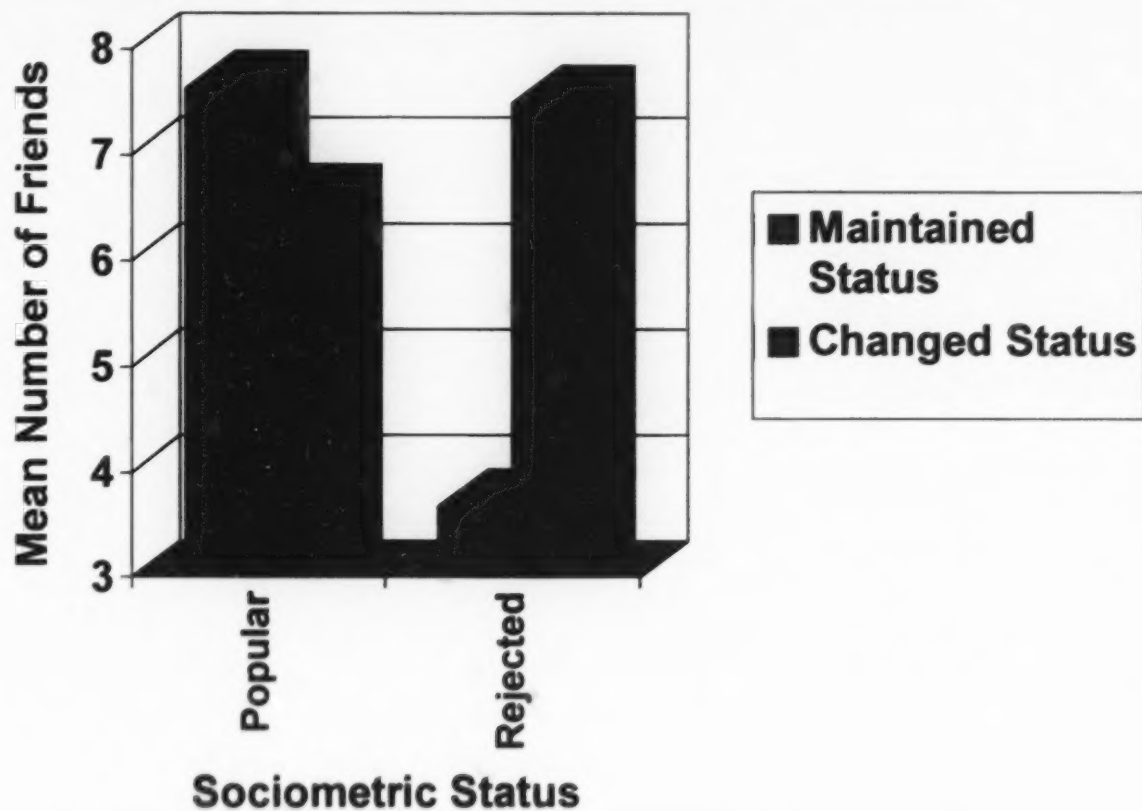
As a final analysis, we wished to determine the degree to which awareness of specific peer liking related to maintenance of Popular and Rejected sociometric status.

1992

1989	Maintained Status	Changed Status*
Popular	11	16
Rejected	9	12

*Changed status means changed from Popular (or Rejected) to any of the other 4 sociometric status categories.

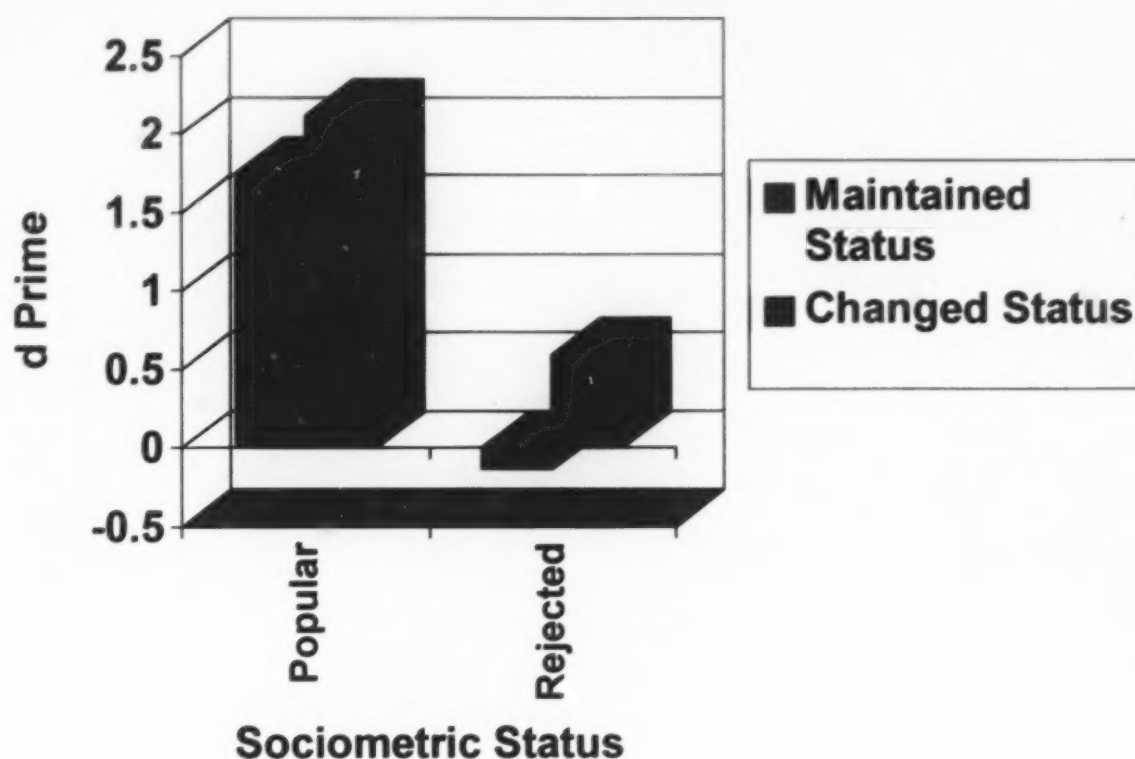
Sociometric Status over time: Friendships



Children who were sociometrically rejected in Grades 1 to 3 who were NOT rejected in Grades 4 to 6 had more mutual friendships than children who were sociometrically rejected in Grades 1 to 3 and remained rejected in Grades 4 to 6.

Popular children in Grades 1 to 3 retained a comparable number of mutual friends in Grades 4 to 6 regardless of sociometric status maintenance.

Sociometric Status in Grades 4 to 6 in relation to Awareness in Grades 1 to 3



Awareness of liking assessed in Grades 1 to 3 predicted who among the Rejected children would change or not change in sociometric status.

Awareness of liking assessed in Grades 1 to 3 did not predict later sociometric classification for Popular children.

Summary

Children's awareness of which specific peers liked them was positively related to their concurrent social competence (as assessed through peers) and was predictive of their social competence 3 years later.

Children who were able to move out of the rejected sociometric classification:

1. Not only improved on sociometric assessments such as nominations and ratings, they also increased their number of mutual, dyadic friendships.
2. Awareness of liking in Grades 1 to 3 predicted who among the Rejected children would change or not change in sociometric status three years later.

Conclusions

Awareness of liking may facilitate children interacting positively with peers, thus developing a (continuing) positive cycle of liking between them and peers.

Among the younger Rejected children, those relatively aware of who likes them may be able to have more positive peer experiences which in turn helps them move away from peer rejection.

A clinical application of these findings might be used to help young Rejected children focus on positive peer experiences.

More longitudinal research should be directed at relating awareness of liking to behavioral correlates to get a better understanding of the process of change and causality.

References

Curtis, R.C. & Miller, K. (1986). Believing another likes or dislikes you: Behaviors making the beliefs come true. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51, 284-290.

MacDonald, C.D. & Cohen, R. (1995). Children's awareness of which peers like them and which peers dislike them. Social Development, 4, 182-193.